# Before the FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION Washington, DC 20554

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In the Matter of:	)	FEDERAL LOGICAL
Telephone Number Portability	) ) )	FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION OFFICE OF SECRETARY CC Docket No. 95-116 RM 8535

## Comments on Petitions for Reconstiteration Py ORIGINAL

#### INTRODUCTION

The United States Telephone Association (USTA) respectfully submits these brief comments on the petitions for reconsideration of the Order released July 2, 1996, in the above-referenced proceeding, pursuant to Sections 1.429 and 1.4(b) of the Commission's rules, 47 C.F.R. §§ 1.429, 1.4(b). These petitions were placed on public notice in the Federal Register on Thursday, September 12, 1996. USTA is the principal trade association of the Local Exchange Carrier (LEC) industry, and has been an active participant in implementing local number portability ("LNP"). USTA members will be both providers and beneficiaries of LNP.

#### **DISCUSSION**

I. The Commission Should Explicitly Acknowledge the Effect of the Rural Telephone Company Exemption From Interconnection Obligations

In the Order, the Commission noted that the 1996 Act exempts rural telephone companies from the "duty to negotiate ... the particular terms and conditions to fulfill the interconnection duties created by the 1996 Act, including the provision of number portability, and that carriers satisfying the statutory criteria contained in Section 251(f) may be exempt from the obligations to provide number portability as set forth herein." The Commission then deferred specific application of this statutory exemption to the number portability requirements to the proceedings

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In the Matter of Telephone Number Portability, <u>First Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking</u>, FCC 96-286, CC Docket No. 95-116 (July 2, 1996)("<u>First Report and Order</u>"). Notice of this <u>Order</u> appeared in the Federal Register on July 25, 1996.

implementing Section 251 and 252. <u>Order</u>, para. 83; <u>See First Report and Order</u>, CC Docket 96-98, FCC 96-325 (August 8, 1996)("<u>Interconnection Order</u>").

The Interconnection Order did not reach a specific conclusion on this issue, and correctly deferred to state commission application of the Section 251(f) provisions of the new law.

Interconnection Order, para. 1253.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, USTA agrees with the Petition for Reconsideration filed by John Staurulakis, Inc.("JSI"), which suggests that the Commission should therefore explicitly clarify the practical effect of Section 251(f)(1) on the obligation to provide LNP contained in Section 251(b) of the new Act, as implemented by the Order.

Specifically, the analysis in paragraph 83 of the <u>Order</u> was correct. The legislative history makes clear that the obligation to provide LNP only makes sense "in the context of a specific request" from an interconnecting carrier. <u>See</u> Petition of JSI at 5; Petition of USTA at 13-14, <u>citing</u> Conference Report at 121. Accordingly, it would make no sense for carriers to deploy LNP where no requests for interconnection are made, due to the rural telephone company exemption. JSI Petition at 5-6.<sup>3</sup>

The 251(f)(1) exemption only explicitly addresses Section 251© obligations, and does not grant an automatic exemption from Section 251(b) obligations such as local number portability. Consequently, absent specific action by the Commission on reconsideration, each and every rural telephone company would likely file with the Commission, requesting a waiver of the number portability deployment schedule. There is no basis for creating this unnecessary administrative burden. The Commission should modify its deployment schedule to provide that entities meeting the Act's definition of "rural telephone company" are not subject to the Commission's

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>The <u>Interconnection Order</u> also noted that a rural telephone company is not required to make any showing until it receives a <u>bona fide</u> request for interconnection, <u>Id.</u>, para. 1263.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Similarly, the Commission should clarify that companies who receive suspensions or modifications of the Section 251© requirements by order of a state commission are not subject to the deployment schedule in the initial <u>Order</u>.

deployment schedule while they are exempt from interconnection obligations by operation of Section 251(f).

Should the exemption, suspension or modification terminate by order of a state commission, that state commission should determine when the rural company at issue should be required to make available long-term local number portability. Permitting state commissions to determine the deployment schedule for local number portability for companies subject to the Section 251(f) provisions is necessary to preserve state authority over the full range of issues involved in competition and interconnection for smaller and rural LECs. And it is consistent with the Interconnection Order's determination that state commissions should address these questions regarding economic burden of interconnection obligations, including LNP.

This arrangement also makes sense as a practical matter. State commissions will, by virtue of the proceedings associated with reviewing an exemption, suspension or modification, have available much of the information necessary to determine a reasonable period for these LECs to deploy long-term LNP.

At the same time, the Commission must recognize that even carriers who are exempt from the LNP deployment schedule must still incur additional costs in order to process calls to and from areas with ported numbers. For example, as Pacific Bell notes, intermediate networks must be equipped to perform LNP queries. Petition of Pacific Bell at 12-13.<sup>4</sup> To the extent that these carriers must incur costs of LNP which cannot be avoided, even through a statutory exemption, these costs should be eligible for recovery.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>This is equally true of intermediate interexchange networks on interstate calls, and for CMRS providers who are "outside" the wireline network. <u>See, e.g.</u>, Comments of USTA on Further Notice, August 16, 1996, at 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>In its comments on cost recovery, USTA suggested the category of Type 4 costs - costs incurred by carriers for network upgrades outside the area where LNP is deployed. Comments of USTA at 11. At the same time, USTA recommended that traffic sensitive costs associated with

### II. The Commission Should Permit State Commissions To Re-Prioritize Areas of Deployment Within a State So Long As the Overall Burden Is Not Increased

Both NEXTLINK and KMC Telecom ask the Commission to adopt standards and procedures by which additional MSAs could be added to the initial deployment schedule or require LECs to accept bona fide requests in areas outside the top 100 MSAs at time frames earlier than those specified in the Order. Petition of NEXTLINK at 2; Petition of KMC Telecom at 2. As discussed below, USTA proposes standards and procedures which will permit state commissions and/or state LNP workshops to accommodate the concerns of these carriers that they not be required to wait until mid-1999 to obtain LNP in certain areas.

First and foremost, neither the Commission nor state regulators should increase the overall burden created by the deployment schedule described in the <u>Order</u>. That deployment schedule is already aggressive and will impose significant burdens on LECs' financial, technical and logistical resources. Moreover, that deployment schedule was based on estimates provided by software vendors concerning the availability of software for at least one long-term LNP method. <u>Order</u>, para. 77. Neither NEXTLINK nor KMC provides any evidence that vendors' ability to manufacture and provide LECs with the necessary software has changed. Because the deployment schedule already stretches existing resources to the limits, any additional deployment outside the top 100 MSAs has the potential to harm competition and increase costs.

Specifically, deploying LNP outside the top 100 MSAs to meet the request of a single carrier could delay portability in areas where it has been requested by many more carriers, thus delaying portability in areas where competition is growing more rapidly. And any additional expense associated with local number portability will eventually be borne by customers of telecommunications services. The Commission's phased deployment schedule attempts to tailor deployment to the needs of competitors, while not overburdening vendors, LECs, and consumers

SS7 links and database queries could be excluded from a shared recovery mechanism and instead recovered through specific per-query charges, depending on the level of cost involved. <u>Id.</u> at 7-8.

with excessive expenses. Additional deployment requirements would upset that balance.

However, as USTA noted in its Petition, that deployment schedule is only a reasonable guess, and should be adjusted in light of actual evidence of emerging local competition to require competitors to identify specific switches from which they desire to port numbers, and to exempt areas where no competitor has submitted a request for interconnection, even within the top 100 MSAs. Petition of USTA at 14. By the same token, evidence that competition is emerging rapidly in an area not in the top 100 MSAs may warrant adjustments to the deployment schedule.

NEXTLINK suggests that the Commission be responsible for reviewing whether there is sufficient evidence of competition to justify accelerating the deployment schedule in a particular area. NEXTLINK suggests that the Commission should solicit the views of state commissions in order to determine whether this test is met. Petition of NEXTLINK at 6-7. As NEXTLINK recognizes, most if not all of the information relevant to this inquiry will be in the possession of state regulators. There is no need to involve the Commission's scarce resources in conducting the case-by-case analysis this type of inquiry involves.

Additionally, many states have formed LNP workshops which involve all local carriers in a cooperative arrangement. And in many states, these groups have already begun to discuss deployment priorities, including identification of specific switches and consideration about resource management. Consequently, USTA recommends that the Commission permit state commissions and/or state LNP workshops to adjust the priorities of the Commission's deployment schedule where LECs so request.

Specifically, each state commission or state LNP workshop could determine that, for their state, LNP deployment should not follow the Commission's time frames, but be adjusted to reflect more closely the needs of new entrants. For example, the Commission's <u>Order provides</u> that, within the state of California, deployment in the Riverside and San Diego MSAs should be

completed by March 1998; others, <u>e.g.</u>, Orange Co., need not be completed until June 1998. Still other areas outside of those MSAs may be of interest to competitors. If carrier planning permits, California authorities should be permitted to delay deployment in the Riverside MSA (either certain switches or the entire MSA), in order to bring LNP to the Orange Co. MSA more rapidly, or to include certain exchanges in other areas outside the top 100 MSAs.

But, in recognition of both limits on state regulatory authority, and in recognition of the Commission's prudent consideration of the burden on carriers serving multiple regions, <u>Order</u>, para. 81, state re-prioritization of a carrier's responsibilities should not harm that carrier's ability to deploy LNP in another state. State deployment decisions should be subject to change based on verifiable representations that accelerated deployment in one area could delay deployment in another area outside of the state.

Additionally, the Commission should recognize that in some states or for some carriers, re-prioritization may not be possible or prudent. Many states, <u>e.g.</u>, Illinois, have already reached agreement among all the carriers concerned and finalized deployment plans. And, given the enormous task already at hand, it will be important to retain any efficiencies gained by selective deployment in certain areas, and utilization of common infrastructure for all offices served within an MSA.

Particularly in MSAs with early deployment deadlines, LECs will need to finalize deployment schedules in order to allow for budgeting, personnel and other management organization tasks, negotiations with vendors and suppliers, deployment of the network modifications, testing, and other matters. USTA believes that all LECs, the Commission, and state commissions, can work cooperatively to negotiate deployment schedules that more closely suit the needs of competition, while preserving the ability of LECs to meet their current obligations.

USTA also believes that, as suggested by KMC Telecom, LECs should be encouraged to

submit bona fide requests to other LECs earlier than January 1, 1999, provided that no six-month construction obligation is triggered by the filing of such a request. Petition of KMC Telecom at 12-13. Deployment in certain areas outside the top 100 MSAs could begin on January 1, 1999, subject to the limits of vendor availability and internal LEC resources. Early receipt of requests for portability in such areas would help speed deployment by assisting incumbent LECs in planning and budgeting for deployment. USTA encourages LECs to file bona fide requests as soon as they have finalized and confirmed their business plans. USTA also encourages LECs to exchange information about their LNP needs on an informal basis to the greatest extent possible. Such information could speed deployment by assisting in the process of allocating resources to number portability deployment.

At this time, however, not all USTA members are in a position to state in good faith that they expect to be able to fulfill any and all requests to provide LNP in areas outside the top 100 MSAs by December 1998, or within a period of 24 months, as suggested by KMC Telecom. Petition of KMC Telecom at 10. This is particularly true for areas outside the top 100 MSAs where, as the Commission noted, more significant network upgrades may be necessary for carriers operating in these areas. Order, para. 82. But there is no basis for KMC Telecom's gratuitous suggestion that LECs "inevitably will drag their feet" in honoring requests for LNP in smaller MSAs. Some such requests could be fulfilled within 24 months, depending on the particular circumstances involved. There is no need for additional federal deadlines.

USTA suggests that such requests could be fulfilled on a negotiated timetable, subject to the prioritization discussions occurring in a particular state. This arrangement would be consistent with the Commission's careful balancing of the importance of LNP to competition with the resource limitations of LECs and their suppliers.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup>Of course, to the extent that the request for LNP is made of a company subject to Section 251(f), state commissions will have to determine first whether any exemption, suspension or modification of the interconnection obligations should be lifted. <u>See supra.</u>

### III. The Commission Need Not Address Arrangements For Sharing Access Charges in An Interim Number Portability Environment

MCI asks the Commission to clarify the treatment of access charges in conjunction with interim LNP. MCI essentially asks that the Commission impose a formula for the appropriate split of access charges, and determine that additional switching and transport costs should be recovered through a competitively neutral surcharge mechanism based on each carrier's share of total telephone numbers or access lines in the portability area. Such a mechanism would involve allocation of such costs through a pooling mechanism administered through state commissions. See Petition of MCI at 4-5. A variant of this proposal was raised by MCI at earlier stages in this proceeding. See Order, para. 117.

MCI notes that interim LNP creates additional switching and transport costs. These additional costs, according to MCI, are "costs of local number portability" subject to the standards of Section 251(e)(2) of the Act. Moreover, the level of these costs is significant enough that MCI apparently believes they justify a separate cost recovery pool,<sup>7</sup> administration of that pool by state commissions, and allocation of the costs to [almost] all telecommunications carriers.<sup>8</sup>

The Commission need not adopt MCI's suggestion to allocate the incremental costs of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup>In its reply comments on LNP cost recovery, MCI argues that cost pooling across all telecommunications carriers is inefficient and instead recommends that carrier-specific network upgrades be borne by individual carriers. Reply Comments of MCI at 6-8. Not surprisingly, MCI is more than willing to have other carriers bear a share of the costs of LNP involved with access services provided to interexchange carriers, while it counsels against any proposal which would require it to bear a share of other types of costs of LNP specific to incumbent LECs.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup>MCI proposes to allocate costs to all telecommunications carriers based on each carrier's share of total telephone numbers or access lines. Of course, as USTA noted in its Reply Comments in this docket, allocation based on telephone numbers does not encompass "all telecommunications carriers," since generally only local exchange carriers and CMRS providers are assigned telephone numbers. Reply Comments of USTA at 6-7.

interim portability through a single nationwide pooling mechanism. Interim LNP services are provided either through local service tariffs governed by state commissions, or as negotiated terms as part of an interconnection arrangement. See Order, para. 124 ("incumbents and new entrants have voluntarily negotiated a variety of cost recovery methods [for interim local number portability]"). See, e.g., Order, para. 136. There is no basis to interfere with this process by establishing a single preferred method for pricing interim local number portability services. Rather, the Commission should reaffirm its conclusion to permit states to "continue using a variety of approaches that are consistent with the statutory mandate." Order, para. 127.

Similarly, the arrangements by which carriers share access charges in an interim number portability environment are, as the Commission contemplated, privately negotiated arrangements. There is no need for further Commission involvement in determining how the meet-point billing arrangements used for access billing in an interim number portability environment should be structured. As the Commission correctly noted, "it is up to the carriers whether they each issue a bill, or whether one of them issues a bill to the IXC covering all of the transferred calls and shares the correct portion of the revenues with the other carriers involved." Order, para. 140. The Commission should also reaffirm its conclusion on this matter.

Particularly given MCI's support for a shared cost allocation mechanism for carrier-specific costs of interim LNP, the Commission should give careful thought to this analysis of the statutory cost recovery provisions as applied to carrier-specific costs of long-term LNP. Under the Order, the incremental costs of interim LNP cannot be borne solely by the carrier purchasing those services. See, e.g., Order, para. 138. Essentially, the Commission determined that the "competitively neutral" standard requires that the Commission put competitive new entrants in the same shoes as incumbent LECs who do not require number portability to serve their customers. That is, carriers who obtain interim number portability services should pay the same as carriers who do not - something "close to zero." Otherwise, an incumbent (or a new entrant who provides service through resale) who does not generate any costs of interim LNP would have an impermissible cost advantage. Order, para. 132-134.

If the Commission affirms this analysis, these principles have consequences for long-term number portability. Under this analysis, new entrants who enter the market by resale, and who therefore incur zero costs of modifying their networks to provide number portability, would have an impermissible cost advantage over carriers who do incur such costs. And facilities-based new entrants who incur lower per-customer costs because they can serve only a few selected high-volume customers and who have lower up-front costs of network modification have a distinctively lower incremental per-customer costs than incumbents who must make long-term LNP available in all areas facing competition, regardless of cost and must upgrade older equipment. If LECs must share all the economies created by their incumbency with competitors, then competitors must similarly share the burden of upgrading the incumbent network for long-term local number portability. If the Commission retains this analysis of the competitively neutral standard for interim LNP, it should carry it through to long-term LNP in a consistent fashion.

#### CONCLUSION

The Commission should reconsider its <u>First Report and Order</u> on local number portability consistent with the recommendations described above.

Respectfully submitted, UNITED STATES TELEPHONE ASSOCIATION

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September 27, 1996

### **CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I, Carl McFadgion, do certify that on September 27, 1996 copies of the Comments of the United States Telephone Association were either hand-delivered, or deposited in the U.S. Mail, first-class, postage prepaid to the person on the attached service list.

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